

August 8 '40

Dear People,

Exactly 20 Morning Glory blossoms, 10 sweet peas, 3 petunias. And no more ants, because I slew them ruthlessly & happily. We had had a plague of them. Wonderful garden.

A calendar of events: A week ago we went to the movies with M. Lepetic, our Yugoslav friend, to see a Spanish film, unfortunately (for me) dubbed in French. It was rather good comic opera stuff. Saturday night we had a party, a lovely party. Jones & I provided the food (olives, sandwiches etc.) and the people brought the wine. Babs (the American girl), a Russian American boy from the church, M. Lepetic, a man from the Visa department, and our neighbors came. It was very gay, and we had Asti Spumante just like they do in Hemingway's books!!! M. Lepetic had to go at 11 of course, but the rest stayed on till one, and everyone stayed over night here, the Russian American on the floor, Babs in the spare bedroom, the Visa man on our big sofa. We all cleaned up in the morning, then had a big merry breakfast lasting for hours. In the afternoon Jones & I went to the theatre! We saw a rather dopey comedy and had a lovely time. (We have bought tickets for next Sunday's matinee to see Sacha Guitry<sup>1</sup> as Pasteur<sup>2</sup>, which is having a successful run here.) In the evening after supper at the church we came home and exchanged an English-French lesson with our neighbor, who is a crippled poet. Both he and she are very nice. He is 30, she is about 45. They have been "living in sin" for four years, but Paris being Paris, nobody gives it a second thought. She is a photographer & pianist. He speaks beautiful French, and Jimmy is profiting by his lessons, which occur daily.

Last night after dinner we wandered up to Montparnasse, which we found gay & crowded in an almost pre-war way. We sat down at the Dôme with Tom Esten, Mrs. Edwards & her daughter, and an American boy. We borrowed two recent copies of Life, which set us off in a fury (July 22 and 15). I think America is going stark mad. Lumps of unswallowable propaganda, twisted statements, purple sentimentality, 1492, 1776, the Glorious Days of 1917, childish rot in general. If they want a Defense program, okay. But why get so silly & juvenile about it? The propaganda here has two advantages. ① everyone knows it's pure "bourage de crâne" (mind stuffing). ② The people are aroused mentally, not naïf and perfectly credulous, as in the U.S., where they are under the misleading impression that they enjoy a free press. Therefore the propaganda there is doubly noxious. The French are used to mind-stuffing, and an astoundingly large proportion of the population is politically intelligent. The Americans are so much more unsophisticated and enthusiastic about their politics! Everything can be put before them as a high ideal, a righteous, noble cause. The Frenchman thinks it out, and looks for his own interests. It is heartbreaking to see how the U.S. public believes any rot about the Germans they read in print in the newspapers,

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<sup>1</sup> **Alexandre-Pierre Georges "Sacha" Guitry** (French: [ɡitʁi]; 21 February 1885 – 24 July 1957) was a French stage actor, film actor, director, screenwriter, and playwright of the Boulevard theatre. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacha\\_Guitry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacha_Guitry) (accessed 2017-02-05).

<sup>2</sup> *Pasteur* est un film français réalisé par Sacha Guitry en 1935. Guitry tourne Pasteur en hommage à son père qui joua la pièce de théâtre éponyme Pasteur avec succès au Théâtre du Vaudeville en 1919. Il s'agit d'un « grand film de l'histoire du cinéma français ». [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasteur\\_\(film,\\_1935\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasteur_(film,_1935)) (accessed 2017-02-05)

*Translation: Pasteur* is a French film directed by Sacha Guitry in 1935. Guitry adapted Pasteur as a tribute to his father who played the eponymous piece *Pasteur* successfully at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1919. It is a "film of great historic significance in French cinema".

and firmly believes they are blessed with a free press! Can't they wake up & see that the status quo is never maintained, and that revolutions in economic life are inevitable? That sooner or later the more efficient, the newer system must take hold? The rest of the propaganda is just a sideline, just catch words to rouse the people against this revolution. The fact remains incontrovertible that the totalitarian system, the denial of laissez-faire, is succeeding where the old system fails – in producing to capacity. Right now the totalitarian states are having to battle for their life – just as the French Revolution did during its first 20 or 30 years, and just as the older Revolution won, the newer will because it is more capable of supplying people with the necessities of life. Inevitably the present system can not supply needs continuously at capacity of production – certainly that has been proven. The system broke down in its weakest parts – Russia, Italy, Germany. What wealth the United States could produce if that were not hampered by old methods and old established interests! This must sound like ghastly blasphemy to you in your atmosphere, but it does no good to hypnotize oneself. The world is coming to this new system, and the quicker the United States does the better chance of survival it will have.

We would like to get more letters, my dears. If you knew how appreciated and lingered over they are! As you say, I love the little details of life chez vous. But I should like, too, if you're not too tired of that sort of thing, a word or two of what you think about the Situation. It is so fascinating to me. Particularly Papa John's opinions, since they are so reticent.

Stockings are well-nigh unobtainable, and are horribly expensive when obtained. Hint.

The English bombed the suburbs two days ago killing 10 civilians, which puts everyone in a fine mood.

I love you. I am enclosing some stamps for you.

Me

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